

22 April 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

**Our Lady and St Joseph's Primary School and Nursery Class
North Lanarkshire Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children are learning and achieving and how well the school supports children to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including the active participation of the children in the life of the school; revised approaches to teaching in mathematics and numeracy; the school's ethos and how it promotes achievement; and approaches to planning. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving children's education.

How well do children learn and achieve?

Across the primary stages and the nursery, children are confident and motivated to learn very well. In the nursery, children are enthusiastic learners and are developing their confidence within the playroom. They cooperate together well including when role playing. Across the primary stages in most lessons, children are actively engaged in their learning and know the purpose of the lesson. Most are aware of their own strengths and areas for development and record this in personal learning plans. Children at the primary stage are benefiting from the strong faith-based ethos which underpins everything the school does including the quality of relationships. Children are very polite and considerate of each other and work and play together very well in groups or on their own. They make a strong contribution to improving the school. They eagerly share their views through the school's 'Thinking Circles'. Children are enthusiastic and responsible members of the Friday focus groups, working on eco, Fairtrade, enterprise and website design activities. Children benefit from the close links with the wider community including with senior citizens. They enjoy being taught to knit as part of an intergenerational learning project.

Children in the nursery are making very good progress in their early literacy and numeracy skills. They listen well to instructions and take part in short conversations with other children and staff. They enjoy books and can recall aspects of stories. Their interest in books is promoted through regular visits to the local library. Almost all children can count in sequence to ten and most beyond. They are learning the language of measurement, for example, bigger, smaller and longer. At the primary stages, children continue to make very good progress in their learning. Children enjoy

reading in groups and read a variety of books. They can discuss their favourite authors and many children read for pleasure out of school. They enjoyed the Roald Dahl Day events which promoted reading as a social activity. Children can write well for a variety of purposes and audiences. The school has recently reviewed how mathematics and numeracy are taught to make it more engaging for children and more related to real life. Children have responded positively to more opportunities to learn through playing games such as fraction dominoes and challenges related to the Commonwealth Games. They have a good understanding of different strategies they can use to solve mathematical questions. Children are making good progress in the expressive arts where they benefit from specialist teaching such as the regular sessions in P5 from a visiting voice tutor. At all stages, children are developing a good understanding of a healthy lifestyle, for example, making soup in the nursery and a bakery company working with children to deliver a healthy sandwich workshop. The Philosophy for Children programme encourages positive attitudes and develops meditation skills. Children enjoy art activities. They are learning a range of different drawing techniques and the art displays on the walls are of a very high quality.

How well does the school support children to develop and learn?

All staff are very sensitive to children's personal and learning needs. Across the school, the quality of relationships is very high which creates an inclusive and nurturing environment. Teachers have a good understanding of children's individual needs. In the nursery, staff provide a good range of activities and resources which are well matched to the needs and interests of the children. This includes staff from the Confucius Centre providing a stimulating input on Chinese culture. At the primary stages, teachers plan tasks and activities which are at the right level of difficulty to meet the differing needs of all children. Children requiring additional support are provided with a range of suitable resources. We have asked staff to ensure that all children receiving additional support have an individualised plan to enable them to make suitable progress. All the learning targets within individual plans should be relevant to the child and be used regularly to monitor progress. Homework is issued regularly and supports children to improve their literacy and numeracy. The P7 children benefit from a residential experience with other schools in the area. This supports them well in building positive relationships before starting secondary school.

Overall, children benefit from a well-planned and balanced curriculum which is well matched to children's needs and interests taking full account of Curriculum for Excellence. Staff work very effectively together to improve the quality and breadth of the curriculum, for example, introducing a new approach to mathematics and science investigations. Staff are using new weekly planners which allows for more flexibility in developing the curriculum. They plan well for opportunities for children to learn beyond the classroom. In the nursery, children regularly enjoy the countryside through the Forest Schools programme or looking at different types of houses in the neighbourhood. Older children link with senior citizens in the community's Autumn Group. Children benefit from the school's strong links with the local parish priest.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

The headteacher is a strong leader who has a clear sense of purpose and direction. She provides a high level of support to staff, children and parents. She is ably

supported by her two principal teachers. Together they provide a clear vision and have established a whole-school commitment to school improvement. Senior staff visit classes regularly to monitor the quality of the learning and teaching. Staff work very well together to agree what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve. Children's participation in suggesting changes is strong and has led to improvements in the playground. Communication with parents is very effective and parents welcome the use of social media, texts and monthly newsletters in keeping them informed. The Parent Council is active and recently surveyed parents' views on aspects of school life. The headteacher regularly seeks children's and parents' views using questionnaires and informal contact. The school could now consider how to keep parents informed of the difference their views have made to the life of the school, using the good practice already established in the nursery as a possible model. This would encourage parents to become more involved in the school. The success of the small parenting group running in the nursery suggests there is scope to involve more parents in the life of the school.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- The headteacher's leadership and staff teamwork in improving outcomes for children.
- The partnership with the Autumn Group to support intergenerational learning.
- Across the school and nursery, children are polite, confident and very well behaved.
- The range of experiences provided to enhance and extend all children's learning.
- The strong faith-based ethos of the school.

We discussed with staff and North Lanarkshire Council how they might continue to improve the school and nursery class. This is what we agreed with them.

- Develop further procedures for identifying individual needs and ensuring that all children receiving additional support have an individualised plan.
- Continue to develop approaches to involving parents in supporting their children's learning.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, North Lanarkshire Council will inform parents about the school's progress.

Mary Berrill
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/OurLadysandStJosephsPrimaryNorthLanarkshire.asp>

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